

*Preservation is Progress*  
...may we be worthy stewards...

# *Chautauqua Historical Society*

Volume 6, Issue 3, Number 16

Fall 2008

- The Newsletter is published three times a year: winter, spring, and fall.
- The Newsletter is a membership benefit at the Piasa Bluffs Assembly (PBA), and Patron levels.
- PBA members have a membership in the Chautauqua Network
- CHS members are encouraged to submit articles to the editor for inclusion in the Newsletter.

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We have 18 PBA members, 67 Patron members, and will send this Newsletter to 154 households.



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### ***The President's Message***

I'm calling this "The History of our History: A Report on New Piasa Chautauqua's Archival Program." Tim and I attended the 2008 Chautauqua Network at Monteagle Sunday School Assembly in Tennessee. About forty people representing the remaining chautauquas attended; the southern hospitality was outstanding. Though there are some big differences, the chautauquas share one thing—a deep and abiding interest in our joint and individual history. Our group had a special meeting in Monteagle's archival center. More than thirty people volunteer in that effort, and they are doing great things to document the history of the community and its families. What struck me when talking with folks from other chautauquas was the high priority placed on history, archival research, and a commitment to providing facilities for safe storage. It was made clear to me just how far some of our fellow chautauquas have come and how far we have to go.

Judy Hurd began the NPC Historical Society in 1972. She started collecting material and storing it under a bed in her cottage. Every Fourth of July, Judy would put up an exhibit in front of the Ad

building. When I lived in Philadelphia, where I worked with a lot of historical houses as part of my exhibit design business, I developed an appreciation for history and learned the importance of preservation. When I returned to Chautauqua, I joined Judy in her efforts to seek out and preserve and care for our historical materials.

Not so long ago, the Ad building was used solely for Chautauqua business and in winter it doubled as a working space for the grounds crew. I remember two wooden storage cabinets—one for the grounds crew and the other stuffed with NPC Minutes, notebooks, and other papers, in no order. Bill Jackson rescued years of Minutes by sorting them and creating notebooks. His work was a great service to the cause of preservation. Jane Caan's memorial fund provided money for new cabinets, chairs, a rug, and other decorations for the Ad building. The Historical Society used the cabinets for storage, and Judy and I started clearing out from under our beds. We were really excited. I had concerns about the storage and documentation of the leasehold files and I made a presentation to the NPC Board in May 2002. Each member was given a four-page report asking for permission to add shareholder/leaseholder records to the growing archival collection. I asked for \$500 for archival supplies, and told the board that the Historical Society would match its contribution. We wanted to preserve these records, especially the very old pieces that are unprotected at the bottom of the file cabinet. I never received an answer to my letter. I hope someday this issue will be resolved.

### ***PRESERVATION IS PROGRESS***

*....may we be worthy stewards...*

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Printed by **Suburban ReMax**, Bob Jackson; color printing funded by **Piasa Bluffs Assembly** members.

The mission and purpose of the *Chautauqua Historical Society* is the preservation and enhancement of the historic traditions and culture of New Piasa Chautauqua, Chautauqua, Illinois, the encouragement of historical research on the Chautauqua community and nearby historic districts, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and other written material on New Piasa Chautauqua, remaining permanent assemblies and chautauquas in other parts of the United States and the national Chautauqua movement, and the establishment of an educational program to inform the Chautauqua community and the general public of the historical and educational value of New Piasa Chautauqua.



As a community, we have made very little effort to preserve historic documents. Much of our history has been lost; much has been given away. Steve Voss gave a major collection to the Jerseyville Historical Society. Jack Jacoby gave a major collection to the Village of Elsah Museum. We know these collections are safe and in good hands, but it is sometimes hard to accept that materials that shine light on our rich history are held by other people. Recently, Carolyn Schlansker gave two wool flags that were displayed in the Springs Hotel to the Historical Society. They are now protected in a special archival box, encased in acid-free tissue paper. (*Thank you, Carolyn.*) We need Chautauqua's support so we do not continue losing precious items to other community museums.

These are some of the things I wished for the Chautauqua community:

- That I could report to the 2009 Network meeting in Maine that we had created an archival center
- That we had a place with lots of space, where we could work any time, not only Tuesday mornings, where we could spread out materials and sometimes leave them out, a place where our history would be secure and safe;
- That we had secure storage, where, after working hard on an album of theater programs, we would not come back and find it missing;
- That we could ask Jerseyville and Elsah to return our materials because we now have a place to store them safely;
- That we had a computer center, a space that showed we had entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century digital age, scanning and documenting records on flash drives; and,
- That everyone in our community was excited about our long history, recognized a responsibility to preserving that history, and supported our efforts.

At the most recent meeting of NPC shareholders, our proposal for an archival center was not supported. For me, it was a bitter defeat. Looking back, we could have communicated better with our potential partners. That said, it would have been an acknowledgement of the pre-eminence and urgency of our preservation needs if people would have given us the benefit of the doubt, recognizing and understanding that details could be worked

out. A few voices were raised about storing priceless materials in a wooden structure. You don't need a stone, brick, or cement structure to create a safe, fireproof environment—think of the thousands of small museums and historical societies across the country.

We so need this space. We have raised over \$10,000 at the Jersey Door, hoping to fund such a space. I hope someone in the future will realize the need for a safe storage and comfortable working space, and will be the leader who moves the community forward in providing a space for Chautauqua's rich history. A lot of work went into the plans for an archival center. The floor plan, the ideas and details for raising the funds, these are on file in the Ad building. Perhaps this person of the future will look them over, see the merit in what we proposed, and have the energy to overcome the objections of the naysayers, and press forward in securing a proper place for our important Chautauqua history. For me, "the torch has been passed."

### **Rose Tomlinson**

### **Editor's Comments**

As editor, I get the chance to decide what goes into each issue. As editor, I get the responsibility and opportunity to write most of the articles that appear in the *Newsletter*. That means a lot of research and investigation. It means also finding and selecting images. The images for this issue come from a variety of sources. Lee Wagers provided the photographs for the "Flags of our Fathers and Mothers" article; they are used with permission. The cover photo comes the U. S. Library of Congress website. The back cover photo comes from a portrait of Colonel Fulkerson that hangs in *Hazel Dell*, his Jersey County home, and is used with the permission of Fred and Brenda Nolan, the current owners. The *Hazel Dell* photo is from [greatriverroad.com](http://greatriverroad.com), used with permission. The photo of F. M. Van Treese (page 4) is from one of our Program books, CHS Archives. J. F. Corrington's photo is from files held at McKendree University, Lebanon, Illinois. The Benjamin St. James Fry *In Memoriam* image (page 4) is from a file held by the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri. We are still looking for a photo of Fry. The photo of A. F. Rodgers (page 5) is from the *Illinois Genealogy* website. The *Alton Telegraph* headline (page 6) was downloaded from the digitized *Telegraph* files at Hayner Library, Alton, Illinois.

So much to know; so little time.

### **Tim Tomlinson**



## *Piasa Chautauqua and the Civil War: Before the War*

Methodism came to the American colonies before the American Revolution, and the first annual conference of Methodists was held in Philadelphia in 1773, two years before the First Continental Congress.

The frontier was a fertile environment for spreading Methodism. Itinerant ministers rode from place to place, holding camp meetings and revivalist services. The spirit of doctrinal toleration and the promise of universal salvation persuaded frontier men and women of the sensibility of Methodism.

But, just as the Founding Fathers were unable to cope with the issue of slavery when drafting the Constitution, so Methodists (and other Christian denominations) split over slavery—blacks formed independent congregations, resulting eventually in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Abolitionist Methodists split from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1840s, and the split was extended and reinforced in 1844 when the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was formed by supporters of slavery.

The Methodist schism was mirrored by comparable splits in the Presbyterian and Baptist denominations. Likewise, the nation's political fortunes continued to be plagued by the most divisive issue in our history. The Compromise of 1820 failed to resolve the problem, as did the Compromise of 1850. The "more perfect Union" that the Founding Fathers predicted was shattered by the onset of war in 1861.

## *Chautauquans at War*

When the war began, Methodists who would become Chautauqua founders in 1885 were affiliated with the Southern Illinois Conference and the St. Louis Ministerial Conference, both part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, as distinguished from the Southern group, which supported slavery. Several of these men were veterans of the Union Army.



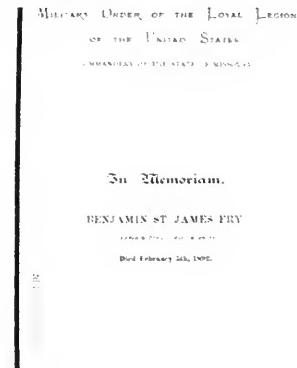
BENJ. F. M. VAN TREES, D.D.

F. M. Van Treese, born in Kentucky in 1844, was seventeen when he enlisted in the Union Army, Fifth Illinois Cavalry Regiment. He served from 1861 to 1865. Two years after the war he entered the

ministry two years after the end of the war. For many years he was the Superintendent of Devotions for the Piasa Bluffs community. Van Treese was an active Chautauquan for over 40 years, presiding over the dedication of Kupferle Chapel in 1926. He died in California in 1927, and is buried in the cemetery next to McKendree College, Lebanon, Illinois.

The first president of our Chautauqua, Benjamin St. James Fry, served in the Union Army as a chaplain, the 63rd Infantry, Ohio Brigade. Fry was born in Tennessee in 1824. He grew up and was educated in the Cincinnati, Ohio area, and became a Methodist minister in 1847.

Fry kept a private diary over the period of his service (he



was discharged in September 1864) that comprised two volumes of personal observations: tales of daily camp life, its joys and sorrows; the names of the sick and wounded to whom he dedicated his service; the names of the dead, including those who died in hospitals away from the battlefields; and sketches and diagrams of the battlefields where the Ohio Brigade was engaged. Fry was also a battlefield correspondent for the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, a newspaper that published his letters as part of its coverage of the war.

James Fletcher Corrington was born in February 1840 at Greenfield, Illinois, and died at Chautauqua in September 1907. His parents were both from Kentucky.

Corrington graduated from McKendree College in 1861, and enlisted in the 122nd Illinois Volunteers the following year as a private. He served as a quartermaster, and finished his military career with the rank of captain.





He had a varied career. He was an Alton, Illinois merchant for a year, then a professor at the Military Academy in Lexington, Missouri, and later principal of Lexington High School. Corrington married in 1867, and entered the Methodist ministry in 1873.

Corrington was not a "founder" in the technical sense. He was elected to the first board of directors in 1885, assuming the post of one of the vice presidents. He was a member of the Masonic Order and the Ransom Post (St. Louis) of the Grand Army of the Republic. Corrington had one of the early cottages at Chautauqua, now Phil and Dorothea Polster's, and his name appears on one of the memorial windows in Kupferle Chapel.

Colonel William Houston Fulkerson was a Confederate veteran rather than a Union Army veteran. He was born in Tazewell, Tennessee, near Knoxville, in September 1834. He received an appointment to West Point, and attended the academy for two years, where Robert E. Lee was one of his instructors. Fulkerson left the academy in 1857 to go to the West as a regular soldier, fighting to put down the Mormon Rebellion.



Fulkerson stayed in the West after his army service was over, first driving freight wagons between St. Joseph, Missouri and San Francisco, and later as a rider for the Pony Express. He left the Pony Express when the intercontinental telegraph line was completed in 1861, taking a job helping survey the Nebraska Territory.

Fulkerson returned to Tennessee when he learned of the outbreak of the Civil War. He was elected Captain in a militia company that later became Company A of the 63rd Tennessee Infantry Regiment. Fulkerson saw action at Chickamauga, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he was wounded. He later fought in Alabama, Georgia, again in Tennessee, and finally in Virginia in 1864, when his unit was assigned to the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Robert E. Lee. Fulkerson was at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865 when Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant, ending the Civil War.

Prior to his service as a Confederate officer Fulkerson married Cornelia Russell of Rogersville, Tennessee. After the war, he determined that it would be difficult to raise a family and prosper in a war-torn South. He and his family moved to Jerseyville, Illinois. In Jersey County, he built a twelve-room home, *Hazel Dell*, on 640 acres, and soon became a prosperous cattle owner and leading citizen of the area. Fulkerson served on bank boards; was a trustee of the University of Illinois; the general manager of the Chicago, Peoria, and St. Louis Railroad; president of the Illinois State Board of Agriculture; a director and president of Piasa Chautauqua; one of the key investors in the development of the Hotel Chautauqua property; and a shareholder in the 1909 Reorganization that created New Piasa Chautauqua. He died in December 1919, at the age of eighty-five. He and his wife are buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Jerseyville.



Fulkerson was, by all accounts, a remarkable man. He visited with Andrew Jackson when a boy; attended West Point; fought in the Mormon Rebellion; was an uncle to American artist Charles M. Russell; and, though a decorated Confederate veteran, became an honorary member of the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1898, at age sixty-four, he was asked to form a regiment from Jersey County to fight in the Spanish American War.

Andrew Fuller Rodgers (1827-1922) was another remarkable Chautauquan. His father, born in England, immigrated to Kentucky in 1818, and then moved to Howard County, Missouri in 1819, where A. F. was born. When he was seven, the Rodgers moved to Alton where his father was a Baptist minister and a founder and early trustee of Shurtleff College.



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The Rodgers had a forty-acre farm in Upper Alton; A. F. was one of twelve children. He attended Shurtleff College for a time and left a clerk's job in St. Louis to return to Alton at the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1848. He enlisted in the Second Illinois Infantry and participated in several battles, including Buena Vista. He returned to Alton after the war, but soon left to join the thousands of Americans trekking to California for the 1849 Gold Rush. First a miner, he became a deputy sheriff for Sacramento County and later a member of the Sutter Rifle Company, guarding the gold fields and mines.

Following a visit in 1853 to Alton, Rodgers was shipwrecked on his return voyage to California. More than 350 passengers were lost when the ship *Independence* struck a rock and burned. Rodgers is credited with saving the lives of at least two of the survivors. On reaching San Francisco, he remained for only one year, returning to Alton in 1854 on the death of his father to work with the family farm and sawmill. In 1860 he married Jane Delaplain, a member of one of Madison County's most prominent families.

When the Civil War broke out Rodgers joined the 80th Illinois Infantry as a captain, and was quickly promoted to lieutenant colonel of his regiment. He was wounded at the battle of Perryville (Kentucky) in 1862. He recovered from his wounds by the following spring, and saw action against General Bragg. Rodgers was captured in fighting around Rome, Georgia in 1863. He spent time in a number of Confederate prisons, including twelve months in Libby Prison. While held at Charleston, South Carolina, Rodgers was promoted to colonel, and later sent back to the North as part of a prisoner exchange. Back in Alton, he recruited several hundred men for the 144th Illinois Infantry regiment, whose main task was to supervise the Alton Prison for Confederate soldiers. Rodgers left the Army in November 1864.

Rodgers was a strong Democrat and loyal supporter of Stephen A. Douglas in the years before the War. He was

## COL. A. F. RODGERS, HERO OF TWO WARS, DIES AT HOME HERE

Death Closes Adventuresome Career of  
One of County's Most Picturesque Pio-  
neers. Fought in Mexican and Civil

elected to the state legislature in 1870. The Colonel had a number of important positions at Piasa Chautauqua, including Superintendent of Grounds, director, and investor in the 1909 Reorganization. The Rodgers' cottage was on

Bluff Avenue, and is now owned by John and Marsha Beckwith.

### Remembering and Reconciliation

Piasa Chautauqua was dedicated to religion, education, and culture. It was also a strongly patriotic community. The Civil War had ended only twenty years prior to the founding of the Western Chautauqua. We should expect, then, feelings about and interest in the war to be high. The 1890 program featured Grand Army Day, with a lecture on "National Atonement" and talks by veterans. A former Lincoln aide lectured on the President in 1893, followed by a talk on "The Sunny Side of Soldier Life" the same season. GAR veterans were admitted free to the grounds, military bands provided spirited music, and campfires and fireworks generated excitement and recollections.

Bishop C. C. McCabe spoke on "The Bright Side of Libby Prison" in 1899, the Day's program concluding with songs and a campfire. GAR Day was the last day of the season in 1900, when Rev. Dr. Jesse Bowman Young told "The Story of a Great Battle," about Gettysburg in 1863. Young was a staff officer during that battle, only in his teens at the time, and had written about his experiences, "What a Boy Saw in the Army." Young later became a Methodist pastor in Gettysburg, and lived in St. Louis at the time of his talk to the GAR and Piasa Chautauquans. A former law student and friend of Abraham Lincoln, John H. Littlefield, lectured on "Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln" in the 1902 season. Another closing day, 1905, illustrates the continuing emotional power of the Civil War. On this occasion, Professor William R. Webb spoke about "Tales of the War" to listeners in the Auditorium. Webb was described as "the Southern story-teller." He was principal of the Boy's School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, and his talk was filled with anecdotes of life in the South during the War. Webb's participation in the season's program demonstrated in part how the healing process had succeeded over time.

Col. A. F. Rodgers, GAR, probably didn't recall any "bright" side to Libby Prison, but he worked side by side with Col. W. H. Fulkerson, CSA, in providing leadership to the Chautauqua community. Both men were directors. Both chaired important committees. Both men stepped up in 1909 when reorganization was required, lending their reputations and cash to the new system, not as Blue or Gray, but as Chautauquans. Perhaps the most telling sign of reconciliation came in 1898, when former Confederate Fulkerson was invited to be an honorary member of the GAR and organize a Jersey County regiment to fight in the Spanish-American War. The country had come a long way from 1861.



## *Flags of our fathers and mothers....*

The Veteran Memorial Flag program was started in 2004, part of a larger effort that summer sponsored by the Chautauqua Historical Society. Fifty years earlier a small sundial was installed in the grove of trees in front of the historic auditorium. A new flagpole was also installed, given by (add name). The sundial was given to Chautauqua by the family of Marine Corporal William H. Clarkson, in memory of the corporal's death in action in the Pacific theater in World War II.

Billy Clarkson's family also gave his military funeral flag for ceremonial use by Chautauqua. Somehow, over time, that flag was lost, misplaced, forgotten.

Fifty years later, fifty-one members of the Chautauqua community, most of them veterans of military service, banded together to restore the Clarkson sundial and the flagpole, and to begin a new flag program. Tim Tomlinson was the chief archi-

tect of this renewal program. This past summer, the program celebrated its fifth consecutive year of flying the military funeral flags of our fathers and mothers: Billy Clarkson, USMC; Marcy Drescher, USAMC; Robert Fischer, USA; William Grundmann, USA; Paul Hattery, USA, John Hormell, USN; James Kreid, USA; Frank Nickols, USMC; and James Thatcher, USN. We now fly nine flags on a rotating basis, five flags each season, with the Billy Clarkson flag the only one that repeats each season.

The Historical Society has developed a simple letter of understanding between the Society and a family that wishes to participate in the Veterans Memorial flag program. The family gives over the flag on long-term loan basis. If, for any rea-



Katie Rose

son, a family wants a flag returned, it will be returned promptly.

The Society accepts the responsibility for the care and presentation of the flag, on a rotating basis, on the flagpole in front of the Auditorium. The flag is kept in a special case that is stored in the Administration building.



Gordon and Bill Grundmann present their Dad's flag.

Every flag is cleaned professionally after its use. A small plaque is ordered for each flag. The plaque is displayed near the flag pole when a flag is being flown, and inserted in the case when it is being stored.

The flag program has become a very special program for many Chautauquans. The ceremonial posting of the colors is an important part of the annual July 4th celebra-

tion. The Sunday exchange of flags draws an increasing number of participants each season. Not all Chautauquans attend chapel services, and not all chapel goers participate in the flag exchange ceremonies, but, having said that, each season more and more of us find the time



Ceremonial folding of the flag

to honor our veterans in this important, symbolic way. The program works, in large part, because of the volunteer spirit that is a Chautauqua tradition. Our veterans raise and lower and fold each flag. So, thank you, Chuck Bryant, Don Bryant, Larry Colbert, Gary Cooper, Dan Drescher, Buffy Greisedieck (USO), Bill Grundmann, Tom Hagemann, Dave Hagin, Joe Laflier, Jerry Podesva, Carl Raab, Bob Street, Chuck Schaeffer, and Ken Trabue. Thanks also, this year, to our trumpet prodigy, Katie Rose Wagers.



**Colonel William Houston Fulkerson**

returned to Tennessee after Lee surrendered at Appomattox, April 1965. He moved to Jerseyville, Illinois in 1866 to begin a new life as an entrepreneur interested in agriculture and cattle. His home, *Hazel Dell*, located north of Jerseyville, looks today much as it did in the late nineteenth century. It is listed as a meeting camp by the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), and was listed as a camp/post of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) in Illinois. *Hazel Dell* is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is thought to be the only Confederate mansion house in the State of Illinois. For the last several years *Hazel Dell* has been the setting for an annual Victorian Festival, with Civil War displays and a military reenactment.

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